

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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WHAT HE COST HER.

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"HALVES," &c.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE DECISION.

SINCE the three principals, connected with the contemplated partnership of Cecil and Ella, were for a speedy settlement of that event, the preliminaries were carried on with unusual quickness. Three weeks from that evening on which Cecil consented to his father's conditions, had brought the happy pair to the brink of wedlock, and but one clear day only intervened.

In the meantime a good deal had happened which, under other circumstances, would have been deemed important, but which had been dwarfed by the neighbourhood of the greater event. Cecil had been removed from the Royal Military Academy to the general regret—though with a few exceptions, as in the case of Gentleman-cadet Whymper, who looked forward to more peaceful nights, if not to happier days—and formally made a partner in the house of Landon and Son, of Wethermill-street, and also of the West of England. A charming little furnished house had been taken near Hyde-park, for the reception of the bride and bridegroom after their honeymoon in the Lake District, Mr. Landon, senior, being of opinion that the "young people" had better have a home to themselves. A change of arrangements was, however, made necessary in the colonel's case, who, deprived of the assistance of Ella's income, did not feel himself "justified" in continuing to inhabit Hawthorne Lodge; and he was once more

returning to barracks, close to his old friend the commissary.

The latter gentleman had the affliction—which he bore with the equanimity of a philosopher, if not with the submission of a Christian—of seeing his wife grow feebler and less sentient daily; but, on the other hand, he was gladdened by another circumstance. Ella had insisted upon giving Gracie not only her dress as bridesmaid, but also a complete trousseau, just as though that young lady were about to be married herself.

"It will come very handy, and save my pocket," reflected the commissary, "if anybody eligible should take a fancy to the girl;" though, at the same time, he confessed to himself that "the girl" was not looking so attractive as heretofore, nor—what was worse—laying herself out to attract. Just now it was quite as well that she should be "hanging on hand" in order to attend to her mother; but in view of certain contingencies, it would become expedient that she should alter her course of conduct. That she would alter it, when the time arrived, the commissary had no grain of doubt; for what was at the bottom of her present behaviour were mere humours and crotchets, against which he flattered himself he possessed an antidote. If sentiment had ever led him to write an epitaph for his own tombstone, it would probably have been comprised in four words, concentrating, though without subliming, the essence of his character—"He stood no nonsense."

In this manner, and not otherwise (as is said in the classics), were matters progressing with the various personages in this history, up to a certain morning when the colonel and Ella sat at breakfast at the

Lodge together for the last time—for a marriage breakfast is not to be counted in the ordinary catalogue of such meals. Mr. Landon, senior, was expected in a few hours, and Mr. Landon, junior—who had been in and out of the house on these latter days, as the colonel poetically described it, “like a dog at a fair”—was likely to arrive in a few minutes. It was probably the last occasion on which uncle and niece could count upon being alone together.

“I am afraid you have had a short night,” said the colonel, kindly, “for I heard you about your room till the small hours this morning. That is not the way to keep the roses in your cheeks for to-morrow, my dear.”

“Yes, I had a bad night,” returned Ella, gravely. “I could not sleep for thinking about—about that matter of the name. I have made up my mind to tell all to Cecil.”

“It would be stark, staring madness,” answered the colonel.

“I am quite aware that your dislike to the person of whom we are both thinking,” continued she, calmly, “induces you to wish me to defy him—to outrage his sense of what is right as much as possible. But in telling Cecil I shall not have swerved from my resolution in that respect. No one else need know except my husband.”

“If you tell him he would never consent to be your husband.”

“Why should you say that?”

“Because I know the man. In the first place, I doubt whether he would forgive you the past deception. He is a man of honour, and naturally frank; the school in which he has been brought up, too, is, I am glad to say, one in which truth is respected.”

“You were brought up in it yourself,” answered she, scornfully, “and yet have been an accessory to what you please to call my deception.”

“It is like a woman to throw that in my face,” retorted the colonel angrily. “Just as though one had given some persecuted wretch an asylum under one’s roof, and he should say, ‘You have knowingly harboured a criminal.’ If it was dislike to another as much as liking to yourself that caused me to befriend you, it does not lie in your mouth to say so.”

“Don’t let us quarrel, uncle, on our last day together. I was wrong to taunt you; forgive me. I want your best advice, or rather the best reasons you have to urge in favour of that silence which, I confess, gives me great uneasiness. Cecil will find

out my secret some day, and then it will be the worse for me.”

“It will not be pleasant, I have no doubt, but he will be your husband by that time; if you have played your cards well, he will forgive you all, for love of you; if not, he must still stick to you. It will merely make ‘a scene’ between you; or, at most, a quarrel of greater or less duration. But, as I say, in the first place, if you tell him now, resentment may make him fly off the hook altogether; and, in the second, it is certain, even if he forgives you, that he will not be a party to the continuance of such a state of things. He will insist upon the truth being told to-morrow.”

“Never,” cried Ella, passionately. “He will never make me break my oath.”

“Then you will keep it, and lose him. He will slip out of the halter just as you are putting it over his head. You have asked for my opinion, and there it is.”

And the colonel took up the newspaper, and hid his face behind its columns.

“Uncle Gerard, listen to me. All you have said only makes me more resolved—”

“Naturally, my dear,” said the colonel bitterly; “that is a family characteristic.”

“I say I am resolved to risk it. I cannot, I dare not, deceive Cecil, when I know that some day or another he must come to know it—If you sneer like that, you coward, you will drive me mad.”

The colonel had certainly chuckled in rather an aggravating manner; but the provocation seemed hardly proportionate to the effect. Ella’s countenance was distorted with rage. It was as though one of the Graces had changed places—while retaining her beauty—with one of the Furies. Her uncle, too, looked the very picture of curbed passion, and though he had no beauty to lose, it was curious to see how strongly the family likeness came out between them.

“Pray go on, madam,” said he, stiffly. “This is your house so long as you choose to stay in it, and, if you carry out your present plan, you will be its tenant for some time to come. Say just what you please, I beg.”

“It is cruel and unkind, Uncle Gerard,” resumed she, more calmly, “that you will not control yourself—”

The colonel lifted up his hand. “Control myself! that is a good joke,” the action seemed to say.

“And because,” she went on, “the subject of discussion stirs your anger, that you

should thus turn on me. I must revert to it for a few moments; bear with me a little, since it is for the last time. Here is the record—word for word, so far as I can remember, and the memory of it, Heaven help me! is not like to fade—of what took place at Gadsden. I wrote it out last night, and propose, to-day, to place it in Cecil's hands. It will, at least, excuse my conduct in his eyes, if it does not justify it."

The colonel shook his head, and, with an incredulous smile, took the paper she held out to him.

"Read that," she said, pointing with her finger; "all that goes before is explanatory of my life at home."

The colonel looked up after a minute.

"But I know this also; this is the last tableau very vivand, is it not, as you described it to me?"

"Yes; but I wish you to read it. If there is anything different—anything extenuated on my own part, or set down in malice on another's—tell me."

The colonel read on in silence to the end.

"It seems to me a fair account," observed he coldly.

"It is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing—"

"There, there! you are not in a court of justice!" exclaimed he, impatiently; "and when folks make oaths only to break them—"

"I don't intend to break mine, Uncle Gerard. If Cecil takes the view you anticipate, I shall not give in. My heart will be broken, that's all. But I mean to show him this." And she touched the paper with her forefinger.

"You mean to put that statement in his hand, do you?"

"I do."

"Then, let me tell you, if you do so, and you should gain your point, that your marriage will become invalid."

"Invalid!" She pressed her hand upon her heart, then glared at him with eyes of fire. "You will say anything to have your way, Uncle Gerard. I don't believe you."

"Your manners are not good this morning, Ella. However, it is not a question of my word, but of what the law says." He rose, unlocked a desk, and took from it a document neatly folded. "Here is Mr. Pawson's opinion, given on the hypothetical case you bade me lay before him. As matters now stand, it says the marriage is a good one. If you show Cecil that

statement—you can read what the man writes for yourself: 'The marriage, if it should take place under present circumstances, is void.'"

Ella leant over the paper, written out in a clear and legal hand, and read over the words he pointed out, again and again.

"Well, girl; have I spoken truth or falsehood?"

"Truth, Uncle Gerard. I was wrong to doubt you—wrong, too, to anger so the only friend I have in the world."

"Nay; say, rather, the only friend who can make allowance for your tempers, Ella, 'knowing which way they come.' Come, if we must part—and, believe me, I grieve that it has come to that—let us part good friends. Kiss me, dear."

She embraced him affectionately. Her passion seemed to have been wholly swept away by some stronger feeling. Her tall frame trembled with emotion; and she was pale to the very lips.

He put the "opinion" in his desk again, and, pointing to the other paper—the "statement," as he had called it—said:

"I think you had better tear that up, Ella."

"No, uncle." She folded it up carefully and placed it in her bosom. "Cecil shall never see it; but it will be a witness to myself—that I had, at least, intended to be frank and true to him. I perceive that it is not in my power to be so."

"Not if you wish to be his wife."

Here the gate-bell rang, and Ella's colour rushed back to her face; she drew back into a corner of the room, while her uncle walked to the window.

"It is not Cecil," said he. "It is the old hunk himself. He must have sat up all night to get here by this time, unless he got up in the City at sunrise. What a twenty-four hours is before us! I look to you to see me through it, Ella."

CHAPTER XIX. THE WEDDING.

MARRIAGES are not so frequent in garrison towns as might be wished, and, indeed, are wished. I have heard an experienced military matron, with six married military daughters, declare, notwithstanding her success—or, perhaps, because of it—that officers in the army, looked at from a matrimonial point of view, like that celebrated horse described in the pages of Mr. Joseph Miller, have but two faults—they are hard to catch, and, when they are caught, they are good for nothing.

And if the bridegrooms in such localities are commonly persons of small income—which is what the lady meant—how much more is this the case with the brides, who are, of course, the daughters of those who in their time have been “good for nothing,” and inherit their parents’ property?

Miss Ella Mayne was that *rara avis*, an heiress, and her wedding would have made a great sensation in any case, but since she married a young gentleman with money, the excitement was doubled. It was Ella’s particular desire to have as quiet a wedding as possible—as may be concluded from her having but one bridesmaid—but “society” was not to be balked in that way, and it was certain that the church would be crowded with spectators.

She had not many acquaintances, however, to whom to make her adieux, and Mrs. Ray and her daughter were the only two who could be called her friends.

The former, of course, could not be present at the ceremony, and Ella came to wish her good-bye, in private, upon the day before it; not even Gracie was present. A magnificent lace collar, begun by the invalid, in days when she had the free use of her now failing hands, and finished by her daughter, was the single marriage present from them both.

“I shall prize it as much as this locket of dear Cecil’s,” said Ella, with much emotion; and certainly no words from her mouth could have expressed a deeper sense of acknowledgment. Nothing else could she say at that moment, for the sense that her visit was a farewell one for ever weighed heavily on her heart. Mrs. Ray herself, however, was calm and cheerful.

“You should not weep for me, darling, but rather rejoice that my time of rest is almost come. The promise you have given me as to Gracie has made my burthen light for the end of my journey.”

“It will be kept,” whispered Ella earnestly.

“I know it. She will do her duty by her father so long as he needs it—she is Duty itself, you know—but when he marries again she may have to seek another home.”

“When he marries again!” repeated Ella, horrified that her companion should speak of such a contingency at such a time. “He will surely never do anything so shameful!”

“He has been thinking about it ever so long, my dear,” replied the invalid, quietly. “I hope he will be happier with

her—whoever she may be—than he has been with me. But I don’t think Gracie will be happy with her.”

“I should think not, indeed,” said Ella scornfully. This projected union of the far-sighted commissary was certainly more hateful to her, on account of her own approaching nuptials. It seemed abominable that the bliss of matrimony should be shared by her and Cecil in some sort, as it were, in common with this hard-hearted, hard-headed, vulgar, despicable old man. The contrast of her own immediate view of life, all brightness and rose colour, with what this poor lady’s must needs be, gave her, too, for the instant, a sense of resentment that was almost disgust. Surely people had no reason to be so miserable! Then her better nature asserted itself, and she took the other’s almost impassive hand in her own and pressed it affectionately.

“If I can ever do anything, dear Mrs. Ray—”

“For Gracie,” interrupted the invalid, smiling. “You will do it; of that I am certain.”

It was terrible to hear a living woman thus talk of herself, as though she were already in her grave.

“As for me, darling,” she went on, “you will never see me again in this world. If I see you, and you are in trouble, and I have not the means of helping you, then the other world will be for me a sad one—also.”

Her tone was not one of complaint, but the pathos of that “also” went to her listener’s heart.

“It is selfish of me to make you sad, Ella, and very ungrateful. If the kiss I give you now could express all the tenderness and good-will I feel for you, it would be almost as sweet as that of your lover’s to-day, or of your bridegroom to-morrow.”

Ella had rarely known her invalid friend so demonstrative in her regard, and certainly never so poetic in the expression of it. There had been a romance, she began to understand, even in this poor lady’s life, at one time, though it had ended so prosaically. Was it possible that she might, one day, awaken from her own dream of bliss to some such grim reality?

Not till long after that sad parting was over did Ella become herself again, and even a meeting with Cecil scarcely effaced its memory.

Mr. Landon, senior, was more than gracious to her; the favourable impression

she had made upon him from the first had deepened, and he humorously informed the colonel that if "Master Cecil" should be "non est" at the last moment, he, Bart. Landon, was prepared to supply the deficiency, and marry Ella himself off hand. It was a picture to see the colonel's face as he received these pleasantries, and grinned at them.

"I may not have done much for you hitherto, my dear Ella," he frankly told her, "but, by jingo! I have made up for it within these twelve hours. In addition to all his other horrible qualities, this father-in-law of yours is a wag."

After dinner, while the two men sat over their wine ("that rogue Cecil," as he called him, having stolen away from them into the drawing-room), Mr. Landon was in dreadfully high spirits.

He confided to the colonel how much he expected to "turn over" in the course of the year, in trade; which, indeed, ought to have been considerable, considering the value of the diamonds he had given Ella for a marriage gift; and even whispered into his astonished ear a secret or two of the dyeing business. "When you and I go, colonel, as we soon must—"

"Pray speak for yourself," snapped the colonel, who had the greatest objection to any reference to his own decease.

"Well, well, there can be but a very few years between us. I say, when we do go, there will be doubtless something worth having for our young people. I am not one to place an undue value upon money, but it makes things move smoothly. And of course it is a satisfaction to me to see your Ella situated similarly to my own boy; that is as to relatives. If she had a tribe of brothers and sisters, it would be so much the worse for him. And even fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law are apt to interfere with a man's happiness."

"I don't think I would mention that ground of satisfaction to Ella," said the colonel dryly.

"No, no, of course not; and, to be sure, I had forgotten that her mother must have been your sister. Has her father been dead long, poor fellow?"

"Really, Mr. Landon, the whole subject is extremely painful to me."

"Then I won't mention it. At our time of life I have noticed men are not generally so sensitive upon such matters: but it does you honour. You look warm, let us go into the other room: the young folks ought not to resent it, for they will have

one another's company to-morrow, and for years to come, I hope."

The perspiration did indeed stand upon the colonel's forehead, though not from the cause his companion supposed. "It surely would not be murder," he was thinking, "if I were to strangle such a fellow." He had expected to find his guest a bore and a nuisance, by reason of the shyness and embarrassment that would probably overcome a man in his position upon finding himself in such company as Colonel Gerard Juxon's, upon equal terms. He had made up his mind to be affable, and to put a restraint upon that forcible manner in which he was wont to express himself, for the sake of this timorous tradesman. But so far from these expectations having been fulfilled, Mr. Bartholomew Landon had held his own, and something more than his own, during that day at Hawthorne Lodge; and, so far from being overwhelmed with any sense of social inferiority, had rather patronised his host than otherwise. It is needless to say, therefore, how the colonel loathed him. With Ella, on the other hand, her future father-in-law was a favourite, while his presence in the house that day was welcome to her upon another account. After that interview after breakfast with her uncle, she shrank from being left alone with him, from some vague apprehension—though probably groundless—that the topic of the morning might be again alluded to. She had given up her point; being overcome by his argument, but her defeat was gall and wormwood to her. It overshadowed that eve, which, of all eves, should have been a happy one; and even when night came round it found her wakeful, and full of doubt and disappointment, instead of blissful thoughts and blissful dreams. In the morning, however, though her face was pale, she looked every inch a bride, and drew forth the most genuine encomiums from her future father-in-law.

"I don't think you want mountain air to improve you, my dear, and I still think it would have been more judicious if you had gone for your bridal trip to Birmingham."

This was in allusion to the intention of the young couple to pass their honeymoon in the Lake District, about which there had been three opinions. Mr. Landon, senior, had suggested that that interval of leisure might be advantageously employed by Cecil at the midland metropolis, in picking up certain commercial ideas. This suggestion had been received with

some irreverence, and a good deal of mirth. Cecil himself had proposed Scarborough, as being a lively place, and without much reference, I am afraid, to its natural beauties; but Ella had been very strong against Scarborough. The whole Yorkshire coast, she said, was familiar to her, but if Cecil liked the North, why should they not select the Lakes? And the Lakes had, accordingly, been fixed upon.

"We'll come back by Birmingham," said Ella, replying laughingly to Mr. Landon's remark, "and study all the latest mechanical improvements."

"Yes, I daresay; and keep my boy there a week, under pretence of learning them, instead of bringing him home to work," returned the old gentleman. "Oh Miss Ella, I hope you will give up your deceptive ways. I have not forgiven you yet, remember, the way you humbugged me about that contract."

"What was that?" inquired the colonel, who knew nothing of Ella's visit to Wethermill-street. Mr. Landon read in her face that her uncle had not heard of it, and laughed tumultuously.

"Upon my word you are a sad puss," he said. "Well, I mustn't tell tales out of school, colonel. She has bamboozled both of us, that's all. And yet, to look at her, one would think she had not a secret in the world."

There was no paleness in Ella's cheek now; her face was in a glow from brow to chin; the colonel's features, too, began to work in a manner that, to those who had studied the nature of that volcanic soil, gave notice of an explosion.

Fortunately, at that moment Gracie made her appearance and diverted the conversation, but it did not escape even Mr. Landon that he had been treading upon dangerous ground.

When, a few minutes afterwards, he happened to be left alone with Ella, he addressed her with tender gravity.

"My darling," said he, "I feel I was very nearly putting my foot into it just now with your uncle. If I had known you had not told him about your visit to me, of course I would not have adverted to it; but was it worth while to be so secret? As for me, when my old eyes are hoodwinked by such pretty hands as yours, I rather like it. But I think it right to warn you not to have any secrets from Cecil; his character is frank to a fault, and— Ah! here comes your confederate. I was just giving Ella a lecture, Miss Ray,

upon deception, at which you also ought to have been present. I daresay your father knows nothing of your visit to me about the Government contract. Now just suppose I was to tell him!"

"I don't think he would mind very much if you did," returned Gracie, laughing.

"Ah, you are incorrigible, I see; but Ella, I am glad to say, is sorry for her misdeeds."

And, indeed, Ella was looking grave enough. She had not bargained for being lectured on her marriage-day, and there were other reasons that made Mr. Landon's admonition distasteful to her. However, it was no time for discouraging thoughts. The carriage had come to take all four of them to church, where she would require all the presence of mind needed by a bride, and more. The "sacred edifice," as the local newspaper afterwards described it, "was thronged with fashionable spectators," though the marriage-party itself, including, as it did, the commissary and Mr. Landon, could hardly have been described as fashionable. The former gentleman had been asked in consideration of his daughter's services, and came in uniform, with white trousers, which some faint recollection of festivities in out-of-the-way climes had caused him to put on in honour of the occasion.

"My good fellow," whispered the colonel, grimly, "you have made a slight mistake; it is only the bride that should appear in white, and you are not the bride, you know, nor anything like it."

It was disagreeable for the commissary to find Mr. Hugh Darall in the post of Cecil's "best man" (though he might have taken as much for granted), since his last interview with that young gentleman had been far from agreeable. But not much regard was paid to the commissary's sour looks, or even his "duck" trousers; all eyes were fixed upon the young couple as they stood in front of the altar-rails, a picture "to make an old man young." A handsomer pair it would have been hard to find, or (which is better) a more winsome; for Cecil had such a face as bespeaks for its possessor the goodwill of the beholder, and Ella's had none of that haughtiness which, in women, so often accompanies (and detracts from) exceptional beauty. She held her head high too, and had a certain listening and expectant air, such as the stag assumes when doubtful tidings are borne to him upon the mountain-wind. So marked was this when the priest in-

quired whether either of them knew of any impediment to their being joined together, that the fancy struck one of the congregation that she looked as if she apprehended interruption, and was prepared to strike it down. No such inauspicious incident, however, marred the ceremony which made Cecil and Ella man and wife. In the vestry a curious circumstance took place; as the bride was about to sign her name for the last time, her newly-made father-in-law whispered something in her ear. It was only, "Don't you sign the wrong name, my dear."

Yet Ella dropped the pen, and uttered an ejaculation of dismay.

"Why, I surely haven't frightened you?" observed the old gentleman. "I meant that you were not to sign your married name, as most girls do in their hurry to show they've caught a husband; it was only my little joke, bless you."

"And it was only that I was a little nervous just at the moment," answered Ella sweetly, as she wrote her name in the usual quick, bold hand.

The colonel had turned his back upon them both, and became suddenly interested in the long rows of parish account-books which stood over his head; but his face grew crimson, and had not resumed its natural colour—which was that of the best description of parchment—when it came to his turn to sign the register.

His guest from the City had certainly not been successful in pleasing him by his conversation during their short acquaintanceship; nor was he more felicitous with the commissary at the marriage-breakfast. He was one of those merry old gentlemen who will have their jokes, and he took upon himself to propose the health of the bridesmaid. There was but one, he said, which he thought hard upon "us gentlemen," and even that one, it was obvious, was bespoken; at the same time giving Mr. Hugh Darall a waggish poke with his elbow. It is probable that no harmless pleasantry had, up to that time, succeeded in making so many persons at once uncomfortable as did that unlucky observation.

Darall, of course, became a peony; Gracie, a rose; and the commissary, no flower at all, but the hue of an inferior silk, shot with green and yellow.

"Now he has done it," muttered the colonel, as though the worthy merchant had at last arrived at the ne plus ultra of his colloquial offences. But it is doubtful

even if he did not cap that, in a certain apparently very innocent remark which he made as he left the house, after the bride and bridegroom had departed.

"You need not trouble yourself to put the little affair that has happened to-day in the newspapers, colonel; that is a business matter which lies more in my way than yours, and, if you will give me the necessary instructions, I will direct one of my clerks to get it done this afternoon."

"The devil you will!" ejaculated the colonel.

"Well, why not? It is of no great consequence, I suppose, which of us pays the few shillings for the advertisement. You don't think the proposition a liberty, I hope?"

If eyes could speak, the colonel's answer would have been, "I think it a dashed piece of impertinence, sir;" but what his voice said was, "I think it a matter that should be left in my hands, Mr. Landon."

"Very good; then you will see to it."

The merchant's judgment of the colonel's capacity as a man of business was a correct one, as was afterwards effectually demonstrated by the fact, that the marriage of Cecil Landon with Ella Mayne was never recorded in any newspaper, save the local one, or advertised even there.

THE OLD DAYS OF THE STEELYARD.

WHEN a traveller from the Continent, via the South Eastern Railway, arrives under the vast roof of the Cannon-street Station, he little knows—and if he knew he would probably little care—that he is on the site of the once celebrated Steelyard, the focus of one of the most remarkable commercial systems ever established in Europe. The story is full of instruction; for although the system itself has died a natural death, it worked a lasting good during its career, in connection with the Hanseatic League of the Hanse Towns.

In the Middle Ages, when the barons of continental countries were powerful men, harrying peaceful industry by the violence and lawlessness of their retainers, the traders of larger towns united for mutual protection, generally with the sanction and approval of the sovereign or feudal superior. An early alliance of this kind was formed between the famous commercial cities of Hamburg and Lübeck, binding the citizens to aid each other in repelling extortions and spoliation. Other towns that did

likewise were Wismar, Rostock, Stettin, Stralsund, Dantzic, Elbing, and Königsberg—all near the shores of the Baltic. To these were gradually added Cologne, Bruges, Bremen, Overysse, Cleves, Brunswick, Thorn, and many others. The word Hanse is believed to have been old Gothic for alliance or confederacy; hence the towns came to be known as Hanse Towns, and the alliance as the Hanseatic League. All the towns were required to conform to a code of rules, laid down by a governing body, but without interfering with the allegiance of the cities to their respective sovereigns. Lübeck became the head of the alliance. To its custody were committed the common fund and the records; in it were held the general assemblies, which elected a president or protector, generally the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, a peculiar order existing in those times. The sovereigns—kings of Poland, emperors of Germany, dukes of Saxony, counts of Flanders, &c.—gave valuable charters and privileges to the Hanse Towns, partly in return for very welcome loans and donations which could be obtained from no other quarter. It was as early as the tenth century that these alliances began; and by the fourteenth the Hanseatic League became very powerful. Not unfrequently it stretched its privileges beyond due bounds, violently endeavouring to shut out from profitable international commerce all traders and trading towns not under the rule of the Hanseatic Republic; for a republic it was in organisation, albeit so much scattered. The League in some instances made special treaties with particular sovereigns against others hostile to them, and maintained powerful fleets in the Baltic ports to carry on naval warfare—always with a view to “the main chance.” The kings of Norway and of Denmark more than once felt the force of the strong arm of the League; and the same strong arm was occasionally used as a mediator, or arbitrator, between sovereigns who were at loggerheads.

Towards the close of the fourteenth century, when the League had reached the zenith of its power, no fewer than eighty-four towns belonged to it, extending geographically from the Baltic down to Switzerland, and from the confines of Muscovy to the German Ocean. These real or proper Hanse Towns subscribed to a common fund, out of which the salaries of officers, the expense of meet-

ings, the maintenance of fleets, &c., were defrayed. The largest towns paid the largest quotas to the fund, Lübeck and Cologne taking the lead. For convenience of business, all were placed within one or other of four districts, headed respectively by Lübeck, Cologne, Brunswick, and Dantzic. Annual meetings were held at each district centre, where also the journals and archives of the district were kept; occasionally, on important matters, the whole of the eighty-four towns were represented at a deliberative assembly, or parliament, held at Lübeck. But besides all this, many other cities and towns of Europe were associated with the League, for mutual protection of commerce and navigation, without being regularly constituted Hanse Towns. Among these were London, Stockholm, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Antwerp, Dunkirk, Ostend, Calais, St. Malo, Rouen, Bordeaux, Bayonne, Marseilles, Leghorn, Naples, Messina, Barcelona, Seville, Cadiz, and Lisbon.

As the Hanseatics grew more and more powerful, so did the sovereigns and states of Europe; and gradually the latter overpowered the former. At one time, when the Hanseatics endeavoured to shut out English merchants from the Baltic trade, Henry the Fourth brought them to reason by threats of reprisal. Soon afterwards, King Eric of Norway and Sweden lessened their influence by giving trading privileges in his dominions to merchants unconnected with the Hanse; while Holland compelled the Hanseatics to surrender some of their Baltic privileges, by a treaty in favour of Dutch traders. About the close of the same century, the Dutch and the Danes, acting in alliance, greatly checked the power of the League in the Baltic. More important was the discovery of America by Columbus, which drew the attention of merchants into a channel beyond the League's range of operations. Bruges declined as a comptoir or trading centre under the growing influence of Holland; while the increase of the national power in Russia and Norway led to a similar decline at Novgorod and Bergen. The League crumbled away by degrees during the remainder of the sixteenth, and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, and held its last general assembly at Lübeck in the time of our Charles the First. After that there was simply a limited league for mutual aid and com-

merce between Lübeck, Hamburg, and Bremen, which assumed the titles of "Free Hanse Cities," each forming a kind of small republic.

And now for the Steelyard, and its associations with the Thames.

Long before the Hanseatic League existed in a regular form, a society of Germans was located in London, with privileges conferred by the sovereign government. There were even some indications of this before the Norman Conquest; but at any rate, in the thirteenth century, there were merchants of Cologne who were specially exempted by a proclamation issued by the English sovereign; all foreigners were to quit the kingdom except those merchants who were members of the Hanseatic Corporation in London,* and who paid thirty marks to the king for permission to retain possession of their Guildhall in the city, known as the Gilda Aula Teutonicorum, or Guildhall of the Germans. About forty years later, Henry the Third, at the solicitation of the Emperor of Germany, gave them a charter, declaring that they should be "maintained and upholden through the whole realm, by all such freedoms and free usages or liberties as by the king and in his noble progenitor's time they enjoyed." They were great traders in wheat and other grain, cables, ropes, masts, pitch, tar, flax, hemp, linen cloth, timber, wax, steel, and other merchandise. Their premises stood between Thames-street and the river, bounded by Allhallows-lane on the one side and Cosin's-lane on the other. It is not clearly known at what time the premises received the name of the Steelyard, nor what this word originally meant. We find it under the various forms—Staelhoff, Staelyard, Stillyard, Steleyard, and at length Steelyard; and many authorities believe that it came from Staplehoff, a place for the storing, buying, and selling of staple commodities. The buildings were surrounded by a high wall, and had a wharf or quay towards the river.

In these premises the foreigners lived and traded, keeping their own affairs to themselves with a singular degree of secrecy. They were bachelors, monks, recluses in their home, nearly as much shut out from the world as the inmates of a monastery. They had a common meeting-room, but separate cells. No inmate was allowed to

marry, or to hold any intercourse with the other sex; every breach of this rule was followed by immediate expulsion. At a fixed hour in the evening all had to be at home, the gates were rigidly closed, and were not reopened till a fixed hour in the morning. The meals were taken in common, as in the refectory of a monastery. But if the Steelyard merchants were a species of monk, they were monks of a jolly kind as to creature comforts, for they ate and drank of the best. They had for a long time the exclusive privilege of selling Rhenish wines in England, by wholesale and retail; the quantity kept in store was very large, and they imbibed liberally of it. They were governed by a council or committee, consisting of a master or alderman, two assessors, and nine common councilmen. There was an annual re-election, at a general meeting held on New Year's Eve, when other public business of an important kind was also transacted, and the master formally installed. All the members of the council took a solemn oath: "We promise and swear to keep and uphold all and every the rights and privileges of the Hanse merchants in England, as well as to obey the laws and regulations to the best of our abilities; and we promise and swear to deal justly towards everyone, whether powerful or humble, rich or poor. So help us God and all His saints!"

As in the northern parts of the Continent, so in England, the merchants were able to obtain many privileges, because they were often useful money-lenders to the king. Long before the League was definitely formed, foreign merchants, known as Easterlings, were settled in England. So early as the second half of the tenth century, Ethelred granted certain privileges to them, in return for gifts of five pairs of gloves, ten pounds of pepper, sundry vessels of vinegar, and sundry pieces of cloth, to be presented at Easter and Christmas tides. The gifts may seem to us wondrous small, but must not be judged by our present standard. The Steelyard merchants, as successors of the Easterlings, continued to be frequent recipients of royal favour, and for the same reason—that they advanced loans and presented gifts to monarchs often very short of cash.

We may be well assured that the sturdy citizens of London were not disposed to view complacently these favours conferred upon interlopers, outsiders, intruders from

* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, Vol. 16, p. 514, "Threatened Guilds."

beyond the seas. There was a ferment towards the close of the thirteenth century, raised by the English corn-growers and dealers, who complained that the Steelyard merchants brought in so much foreign corn as to lower the market value of English growths. The Legislature stepped in, and passed a law forbidding the importation of foreign corn when English corn was below certain minimum prices—viz., wheat, six shillings and eightpence; rye, four shillings; barley, three shillings, per quarter. Nevertheless, the Steelyard managed to keep the lead in many branches of commerce. London traders complained that “almost the whole trade was taken by them” (i.e., the merchants of the Steelyard) “to that degree that when the sovereign was engaged in a war, he was almost enforced to buy his hemp, pitch, tar, and other naval provisions of them; and that, too, at their rates. Nor were there any stores of commodities in the land to supply sudden occasions but such as, at great rates, they could sell to the sovereign.”

Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the merchants of the Steelyard displayed the same general characteristics as in the thirteenth, but in a more ambitious degree. They were frequently at loggerheads with the London merchants and traders generally. Each side claimed privileges over the other, and complained that the sovereigns did not sufficiently recognise those claims; while the Steelyard merchants not unfrequently dragged England into hostile relations with the Hanseatic League abroad. The merchants were not only monks in some of their usages at the Thames-street establishment: they were also soldiers; for the strong walls of the Steelyard were occasionally assaulted by angry citizens, and required to be defended with vigilance and courage. We need not greatly marvel that public feeling was not at all in favour of the strangers. They were free from many imposts and burthens that weighed on English industry; they paid fixed customs duties, instead of vexatious tolls and extortions from time to time; they had liberty to export and import their merchandise in English or in foreign ships at their discretion; they were under a separate jurisdiction from the rest of the people; and they formed, in effect, a state within a state. Notwithstanding all this, however, the Steelyard community rendered great service to England; they

encouraged foreign trade, which could hardly have grown up through native agency alone, and paved the way for the wonderful maritime commerce of the last three centuries.

The house of Tudor was fatal to the Steelyard merchants. Henry the Seventh and Henry the Eighth gave them many a check; the brief reign of Edward the Sixth was still more untoward to them. In Edward's time the complaints against them became very serious. They set what prices they pleased on exports and imports; they virtually commanded the market by their large subscribed joint-stock funds; they monopolised English commerce to such an extent that, in one single year, they exported forty times as much woollen cloth as all the English merchants combined; they were accused of defrauding the Customs, by taking under their own names (as they paid little or no Customs duty) great quantities of the merchandise of other foreigners not entitled to their immunities; and that, by gratuities privately given to persons in authority, they had obtained privileges beyond those specified in their charters. The Privy Council investigated all these matters in the time of Edward the Sixth, and came to a decision unfavourable to the foreigners. A decree was issued to the effect that “the privileges, liberties, and franchises claimed by the said merchants of the Steelyard, shall from henceforth be and remain seised and resumed into the king's grace's hands; until the said merchants of the Steelyard shall declare and prove better and more sufficient matter for their claim in the premises; saving, however, to the said merchants all such liberty of coming into this realm and trafficking in as ample manner as any merchant-strangers have within the same.”

This decree was a heavy blow to the confederacy. It was followed up by another in the reign of Queen Mary, greatly increasing the rate of duty imposed on the merchandise in which the Steelyard trafficked. Elizabeth raised the duties still higher, and this led to complicated diplomatic proceedings; for the Steelyard appealed to the Hanseatic League, and the League to the Germanic Diet. Great pressure was brought to bear on Elizabeth—a mingled battery of persuasions, menaces, and retaliations; but she remained firm. At length she declared all the Steelyard privileges null and void for ever, but without prohibiting the merchants living and

trading in England on the same terms as her own subjects. Next, she forbade them to export any more English wool and woollens, hitherto one of the most profitable branches of their trade. Finally, to get rid of a complication which was becoming more and more troublesome, she decreed the complete closing of the Steelyard and the departure of the merchants.

For a considerable period afterwards, the Steelyard was used as a kind of navy storeyard; then it was let out to merchants and wharfingers; and at last the South-Eastern Railway Company bought it, pulled it down, and erected on the site the river frontage of the Cannon-street Station. Once upon a time the chief hall of the Steelyard was adorned with Holbein's two famous pictures, the "Triumphs of Riches and Poverty," so elaborately described by Pennant. "In the Triumph of Riches, Plutus is represented in a golden car, and Fortune sitting before him, flinging money into the laps of people holding up their garments to receive her favour; Ventidius is written under one, Gadareus under another, and Themistocles under a man kneeling beside the car. Crasus, Midas, and Tantalus follow; Narcissus holds the horse of the first; over their heads, in the clouds, is Nemesis; by the sides of the horses walk dropsical and other diseased figures, the too frequent attendants of Riches. Poverty appears in another car, mean and shattered, half naked, squalid, and meagre. Behind her sits Misfortune; before her Memory, Experience, Industry, and Hope. The car is drawn by a pair of oxen and a pair of asses; Diligence drives the asses, and Solitude, with a face of care, goads the oxen. By the sides of the car walk Labour, represented by lusty workmen with their tools, with cheerful looks; and behind them Misery and Beggary, in ragged weeds, with countenances replete with wretchedness and discontent." Zuchero went to the Steelyard to copy these very allegorical pictures. They were probably taken away by the expelled merchants to Flanders, but where they are now art-collectors must say.

MILITARY LAW.

FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A PRIVATE SOLDIER.

[Much has been said and written by high authorities, both civil and military, on the present difficulty of obtaining recruits for the army, and of keeping your recruit in the ranks after you have got him there. It may possibly not be out of place to enquire how the matter strikes the private soldier,

who is, after all, almost as much interested as any one else. The following paper, from the pen of a soldier of twenty years' service in the ranks, is therefore offered as a genuine contribution to the discussion of a question of national interest and importance.

At the same time, the Conductor of this Journal wishes it to be understood, that, in publishing the article, he does not bind himself to an agreement, in all particulars, with the views and opinions expressed by its author.]

At no time in English history have soldiers been so well paid, fed, clad, and cared for as they are at present; and, paradoxical as it may appear, never has a military life been more unpopular, never have desertions from the Service been more numerous, and never has crime in the army been so prevalent as now. In addition to all this, and although the age at enlistment has been increased to thirty-five years, and the chest measurement reduced to a minimum, recruiting is nearly at a standstill.* War looms upon us from the East, and even should that danger disappear, next year thousands of men will be claiming their discharges on the expiration of their short service; when, if matters do not change for the better, England will have to show, for her increased army estimates, a skeleton force: an army in which officers are more numerous than the rank and file!

That this is not a desirable state of things we can well imagine, as well as that the authorities are at their wits' end to alter it for the better. The Duke of Cambridge has endeavoured to cut the Gordian knot by a letter to commanding-officers, urging less zeal among non-commissioned officers, and advising more clemency to be shown to recruits. But the circular has fallen like seed upon barren soil. Commanding-officers set their backs up at it, have since punished more than ever, and the duke, in despair, betook himself to Germany—to a country wherein military law is supreme, where conscription flourishes in full vigour, and where also the liberty of the subject is much less respected, than it is here. In Germany the first commandment is obedience, and the command falls upon all, be they soldiers or civilians; while here it is only the soldiers who pass under the yoke. The British troops are informed, at least once a month, that "Obedience is the first duty of a soldier;" and practically this, and the

* A General Order, dated October 24th, 1876, again reduces the standard for infantry recruits. Men may now be enlisted who are only five feet four-and-a-half inches high.

consequences of disobedience, hang like twain swords of Damocles over the head of every soldier, from the moment he takes the shilling until he dies or is discharged from the Service. So men under military law become mere machines, for they must not only do certain things at certain times, but are only allowed to think or talk according to the "Articles of War," or the "Queen's Regulations for the Army," the sum total of which comes to this, that "a superior can do no wrong."

Good Protestants smile at the infallibility assumed by the Pope, and yet fail to perceive the absurdity of a similar claim to infallibility, when it is assumed by officers and non-commissioned officers in the army; although, strange to say, while Catholic infallibility increases in strength as it ascends, military pretensions to being immaculate gather force as they descend; and possibly the most infallible creature in existence, and usually the most ignorant, is a lance-corporal of twenty-four-hours' standing. Can such a system have any other result than that of creating, in the minds of those subjected to the tyranny and injustice that accompany it, feelings not only of resentment but of contempt for a military life?—feelings which unfortunately bear, too often, crimes such as drunkenness, desertions, and insubordination as their fruit.

Our thoughts have been lately directed into this channel by the sentences of several courts-martial abroad and at home, all of which have been marked by either excessive severity, or have given proof of maladministration of justice. For instance, an Artilleryman was tried on March 3rd, 1876, at Rangoon, "for being drunk, and striking the hospital-sergeant;" and, although it was proved in evidence that the hospital-sergeant "had been drinking heavily on the morning" the offence was committed (Christmas Day, 1875), and that it was but a scuffle between two drunken men, the private only was punished. At Malta, in the following month, a man of the One Hundred-and-first Regiment was sentenced to five years' penal servitude, for having, when a regimental defaulter, "refused to turn out to shot-drill." An inquest was held only last year at Millbank prison, upon the body of a soldier, who had died suddenly when employed at such work, despite his having again and again complained of illness. Thought to be shamming, he was kept at it, until mercifully released by death.

Some years ago the provost-sergeant at Maidstone, because a prisoner said he was ill, had him stripped and scrubbed with sand, after which considerate treatment the man was so obstinate as to die; and a coroner's jury, even in that garrison town, ventured to think that the result was not so gratifying, as to justify the provost-sergeant in extending this special treatment of his to others. The press even hinted that the non-commissioned officer in question ought to have been put upon his trial for manslaughter, at least; but nothing was done to him, except to remove him from his position of provost, and to appoint him, a week or two later, to a more lucrative post. About the same time as the man of the One Hundred-and-first was tried, a private of the Fifty-fourth got seven years' penal servitude, at Morar, in India, for striking a sergeant of his regiment; while, at Dinapore, a private of the One Hundred-and-ninth was awarded penal servitude for life, "for having struck and kicked Lance-Corporal P—H—, his superior officer." Another private was sentenced to five years' penal servitude, at Bareilly, April 8th, 1876, for striking a sergeant; as was also a private of the Third Hussars, at Mhow, on May 10th following, "for striking Lance-Corporal W—P—, his superior officer." In the foregoing cases, we know nothing of the causes which led up to the acts of insubordination; but in what follows we shall be able to some extent to draw aside, and let others look behind, the curtain that, as a rule, hides the proceedings of all courts-martial from public view.

The reasons given by the Duke of Cambridge, and the Inspector-General of Recruiting, for the growing dislike to military service among the young men of the day, were, too little pay, and too much emigration. "Offer more money," said his royal highness, "and there will be no lack of recruits;" while General Taylor's words were, "Emigration, combined with the high rate of wages now given in civil life, are the causes of the scarcity of recruits, and the number of desertions from the British Army." Money can certainly do a great many things, but it will never alone procure soldiers. "Princes," said Machiavel, "who rely upon their treasures to defend them, do not consider that if money could have done it, Darius would have conquered Alexander; the Grecians, the Romans; and Duke Charles, the Switzers; but they, presuming upon the multitude of

their bags more than the goodness of their men, were all overcome." That emigration and high wages have affected recruiting we will readily admit; but what drives most soldiers not only to commit crimes, but prevents young men from enlisting, is the knowledge that justice is practically beyond the reach of the private soldier.

Emigration and high wages are, as we have said, alleged to be the recruiting-sergeant's chief rivals in the labour market; but to such as favour this idea we respectfully put the following questions: First—Would any man ever think of emigrating to a country, however rich its soil, or valuable its mineral wealth and mercantile products might be, if he was first told that not only the higher officials there, but the overseers under whom he would have to work, could harass him at all times, and that they might even strike or illuse him without any severe penalty being attached thereto; whilst they might likewise defraud him of portions of his pay, food, or clothing, almost with impunity? Second—If, in addition to this, he was also informed that any offence he might be considered, by look, word, or deed, to commit against the state or any of his overseers, would subject him to the severest punishments, and even to death; and that, whatever was the crime he was accused of, the offence would not be judged by a jury of his fellow-workmen, but by a select number from the class to which his accusers belonged; that this tribunal would be both judge and jury, and that, differing from the civil law of England, the unfavourable opinions of the majority* would be enough to convict him;—would anyone, then, we ask, for two shillings, for five shillings, or even for ten shillings a day, bind himself but for twelve months to such a life: a life for which "slavery" would be almost too good a name? Third—And supposing that he was told as well that should he, feeling aggrieved at being robbed or ill-treated by those over him, venture to complain of their conduct, he would only be allowed to do so through the person who had cheated or injured him, would he, before making up his mind, have further to be told that any appeal he might make, against the sentence of one of the tribunals we have referred

to, would probably but add to the punishment already awarded; before coming to the wise determination not to go to a country where the people were ruled by coercion, and where even to make a complaint was an indictable offence, punished with the utmost rigour of the law?

Yet soldiers have to submit to all we have stated above, or suffer, day by day and hour by hour, annoyances which civilians can have no conception of. In what country but England, or in what army in the world but the English, could an officer of over twenty years' service have suffered such degradation as Captain Roberts had lately to undergo, for months, in the Ninety-fourth Foot? and by what military code, save our own, would a court-martial have arrived at anything like the same decision as his court-martial arrived at? Captain Roberts, as conclusively proved in evidence, was drilled with half-clad recruits for over eighty days; and, although often the only officer on parade, was kept out in the rain at drill, a laughing-stock to whoever in the garrison of Belfast chose to look on. But this was not all. "I was relieved," he wrote, "from the command of my company, which was in perfect order, and it was given to a subaltern. I was ordered to attend all courts-martial as a supernumerary, thus inviting the observations and comments of officers of another regiment;" and even when his wife was dying, he was refused leave to attend her death-bed, on the paltry plea that he had already had more than the usual amount of leave. His letter concluded as follows: "The undisguised hostility of the commanding-officer of the Ninety-fourth towards me, coupled with a manner both intemperate and insulting, I am at a loss to account for, except that anxiety to procure a step in the regiment has led to a course of action which, for the last twelve months, has rendered my life intolerable and my position insecure." For writing this letter to a friend, Captain Roberts has been tried by court-martial, found guilty, and sentenced to be cashiered; or, in other words, for having dared to question the conduct of a superior, he has lost his commission, and after over twenty years' service has been cast adrift upon the world.

Now if captains, who have served their country long and faithfully, can be so treated for merely venturing to complain of a superior's conduct, what justice might a private soldier expect to receive who at-

* "The majority in every case binds the minority; the opinion of the majority is the opinion of the court."—Simmons on Courts-martial.

tempted to report anyone of a higher rank than himself? We, therefore, contend that it is the impossibility of getting justice done him in any form, which, in so many ways, makes a soldier's life unbearable, and that this state of affairs arises chiefly from the inequalities of rights and privileges, which are by law established between him on the one hand, and his officers and the rest of the community on the other. In civil life, if an overseer strikes his labourer, or if a labourer strikes his overseer, they are both liable to the same punishment; and this holds good however noble the overseer may be, and however mean the labourer. But in the army, if a private strikes a superior he is liable to death, while if an officer strikes a private, his punishment might be a reprimand. When an officer commits a crime he is tried by other officers, by men possessed of the same rights as himself, and who, in most cases, must have a compassionate feeling towards him; while a private soldier, whether the offence he has committed be against a comrade or a superior, will be tried also by officers—by those, be it remembered, who can have neither sympathy with his feelings or for his failings; who, in short, think it absolutely necessary to repress by the severest punishments all crimes in inferiors against discipline, and especially so, if the attempt has been made against a member of their own body.

Should we not consider it a very curious as well as an untrustworthy system of justice if a person, accused of assaulting a policeman, were tried by a jury composed entirely of policemen; or, if a man summoned for defrauding the revenue, were arraigned before a jury who were all excisemen? Should we not expect that individuals so situated would have as little chance of a fair trial as Mrs. Prodgers could expect, were she defendant in a case wherein a cabman was the plaintiff, and the jury composed entirely of cabmen? Yet in nearly every dispute between a private soldier and his superiors, the interests of the officers, who are judges and jury combined, are quite as antagonistic as in the cases we have imagined. There is this important difference, however—that in the one case the jury could do no more than find the accused guilty, while, in the other, they would not only give the verdict but pass sentence as well.

We do not blame the officers for this sad state of affairs. What we blame is the system which permits of such doings.

At present each officer, as he joins, is trained up in the way his seniors have been trained, and is thus taught to regard each abuse or method of propagating injustice in the army, as a part and portion of the discipline which makes men well behaved in quarters and valiant in the field. Doubtless many will remember what took place at Nottingham in 1849, when the Third Dragoon Guards broke out in open revolt, through the commanding-officer punishing the whole regiment for the faults of a few. The evidence given before the courts-martial that assembled to try the ringleaders was such that the public papers did not hesitate to say, "if the trial had been before a civil instead of a military tribunal, most of the witnesses for the prosecution would themselves have been convicted of perjury." In the celebrated Parry court-martial, again, the "Don't remember" and "Can't recollect" of officers subjected to cross-examination was, for long afterwards, the subject of ridicule throughout the land; while, at the equally celebrated trial of Captain Robertson, of the Fourth Dragoon Guards, officers contradicted each other upon oath for upwards of a month. So it will be seen that the injustice we complain of is not confined to the lower grades, for whether it be a private who complains of his sergeant, a subaltern of his captain, or a captain of his colonel, the result is invariably the same. No form of justice that might seem at all like censure of the conduct of a superior can be permitted in the British Army!

By the fifteenth clause of the Mutiny Act, and the Thirty-sixth, Thirty-seventh, Thirty-eighth, and Forty-first Articles of War, "Any soldier who shall strike or offer violence to a superior officer, or who shall disobey the lawful commands of a superior officer, shall suffer death, penal servitude for not less than five years, or such other punishment as a general court-martial shall award." This is what a private who strikes or offers violence to a superior will suffer; but what punishment will be awarded a superior who strikes or offers violence to a private soldier? According to the One Hundredth Article of War, "Any officer or non-commissioned officer who shall strike or otherwise ill-treat any soldier, shall, if an officer, on conviction, be liable to be cashiered, or sentenced to any other punishment as by the judgment of a general court-martial may be awarded; and, if a non-commissioned officer, he is to be punished accord-

ing to the nature and degree of the offence." It will be observed that not a word is said about a superior offering violence or using threatening language to a private; that while a private like Henry Walter Palmer, of the Ninth Lancers, can be shot "for offering violence," such an offence cannot be committed by a superior against a private. Having mentioned Palmer's case, we may as well relate the circumstances connected with it, as they are not known out of the army. This man had been made a prisoner for some trifling offence; and having been drinking previously, he, when marched up before the colonel, had not got over the effects of his debauch. His crime was being commented upon by the commanding-officer, when he took off his forage-cap and threw it at Colonel —. We believe the cap never touched that officer; but that made no difference, he "had offered violence," and upon that charge was brought to trial, convicted, and shot. His was no solitary case at the time, for at the same station (Meerut), and within the short space of a fortnight, two others were "shot to death by musketry." A man of the Artillery was shot a few days before Palmer; his crime being, "for while a patient in hospital having assaulted the doctor." The man might have been insane, but that was never inquired into. A week later, Private Jurden, of the Thirty-second, was shot for striking a sergeant, and a man of the Eightieth Foot would have been the next victim, but for the outspoken comments of the Indian press, which put a stop to the butchery. The sentence upon the man of the Eightieth was commuted to transportation for life, for although shooting had been, for the time, put down, penal servitude was, and is still, the punishment for striking or offering violence to a superior.

Often enough innocent men were so dealt with. One of the wealthiest men now in Melbourne is a Mr. H—, who was tried, convicted, and sentenced to seven years' penal servitude for throwing a mess-tin at the sergeant of his squad, one night after watch-setting. He was then a private in a Dragoon corps, in the Bombay Presidency. The mess-tin was thrown, but not by H—, and although the two men who slept nearest to him swore he did not throw the mess-tin, he, as we have related, was punished because the sergeant, who could not have seen him, swore to H— having done so. As it turned out, it was a very fortunate circumstance

for H—, but that makes the injustice he suffered none the less heinous, nor the military code under which he was sentenced none the less open to reproach.

Although in every soldier's account-book it is stated that he can go by himself and make any complaint to his captain, yet there is scarcely a regiment now under the Crown where, if a private were to go singly to see an officer, he would not at once be made a prisoner of. "Amongst the modern military changes," wrote that famous soldier and gentleman, Sir Charles Napier, "there is one which has been gradually introduced in a number of regiments, by gentlemen who are usually called martinets (not soldiers, only martinets), who would not let a poor soldier eat his dinner his own way if they could help it. The innovation is that of prohibiting a private soldier addressing his officer, unless in full uniform, and accompanied by a non-commissioned officer, also full dressed! This is a very dangerous innovation; it is digging a ditch between the officers and their men. When I was a regimental captain, any man could speak to me when he pleased, and consult me about his affairs. I tried to be the friend of my men as their immediate chief. . . . But of late years the martinets have altered this, the old custom; and now a private soldier dare not go to his officer unless in full dress and with a non-commissioned officer. In such regiments the men in them are at the mercy of the non-commissioned officers, who, as all officers know well, will often play into each others' hands and oppress the man who complains. This new custom, instead of promoting confidence between officers and privates, changes it into disgust, and except in cases of great anger, when the private goes with a red-hot complaint, he will not speak to his officer at all."

The above was written April 27th, 1851, and whoever has served in the ranks of the army since then—excepting when on active service before the enemy—will acknowledge the truth of the words penned by the conqueror of Sind so many years ago. We have made, as will be seen, an exception, for, strange to say, in war time the ditch between officers and privates disappears, a fact which proves that the style of discipline, so praised and practised by martinets during "the piping times of peace," becomes "a thing of shreds and patches" when put to the test during the actual operations of war.

Perhaps the greatest fiction in the army is, that any man who has a complaint to make can do so when a general comes to inspect the regiment. All old soldiers know how useless and dangerous to themselves such appeals are, and only a few months since it was brought to the notice of Parliament that a gunner of Artillery had been convicted, and sentenced by court-martial to a long term of imprisonment, because he had dared to complain to the inspecting-general! Of course, when the case was brought to public notice, the finding and sentence of the court-martial were quashed; but would this have happened had the matter not attained publicity?

Addison has truly remarked, "It is impossible to fix the measure of obedience without stating the extent of power;" and as, in the army, the extent of power is practically unlimited, so the measure of obedience will be in an inverse ratio. The whole system of military law is not only a snare, but a mockery and a delusion. What, for example, could be more ridiculous or subversive of justice than the two oaths an officer takes upon becoming a member of a court-martial? First, he swears to "truly try and determine the case according to the evidence," and immediately afterwards takes a second oath to "duly administer justice according to the rules and articles for the better government of Her Majesty's forces," and "according to his conscience, the best of his understanding, and the custom of war in like cases."*

Now what kind of verdict would a jury of money-lenders find, if, say, an officer were tried before them, accused of swindling one of those financial agents, if they were first sworn to be guided by the evidence, and immediately afterwards took another oath "to be guided by their conscience, the best of their understanding, and the custom of money-lenders in like cases?" Yet this would be no worse than is daily carried out in the Service, and sanctioned by the highest military authorities! Remember this is no new thing we complain of. Injustice to the soldier has been the "hall-mark" of our military system since the days of Charles the First. Many years ago, Sir Robert Wilson remarked about courts-martial, "That gentlemen who justly boast of the most liberal education in the world, have familiarised themselves to a degree of punishment

which characterises no other nation in Europe;" while another equally high authority—the late Marquis of Londonderry—wrote, "The members of courts-martial are instructed to consider every offence without any regard to the character of the offender; instead of inclining to mercy, they are accustomed to award an excessive punishment, in order to leave it more at the discretion of the commanding-officer, who is thus empowered to be as cruel and as tyrannical as his disposition may induce him to be. And the iniquity of their sentences is still further increased by their too frequently assembling without a thought upon the important trust committed to them, by their hearing with levity, and deciding without reflection."

Here we have the opinion of two eminent officers upon the manner in which other officers were in the habit of doing their duty, and we can give no better idea of the extreme hardship and injustice of some of these sentences, and of the way in which courts-martial are usually conducted, than by narrating the case of Private D—, who was tried at Aldershot in 1858 for "disgraceful conduct." This unfortunate man was at the time an officer's servant, and his master, having lost some three pounds in money off his table, made his batman a prisoner upon suspicion of having taken it. With equal promptitude—although there was not a tittle of evidence against the man—a district court-martial was applied for, and of course granted by the general, to try the case. The man, throughout, declared his innocence; no money was found upon him, neither had he been seen lavishly spending money. The door of the hut had, as usual, been left open; other batmen, as well as the woman who cleaned the officer's room, could go in and out, but all that carried no weight from a military point of view. The court-martial assembled with what, at the time, seemed unnecessary haste; in fact, the whole of the proceedings throughout were a scandal and a reproach to the British Army. For instance, although it is the custom that, whenever possible, a district court-martial should be composed of officers belonging to different corps, yet this one, in a camp where so many regiments were, was composed entirely of officers of the same corps as the accused—of men who had, in fact, tried and convicted him already.

When the charge was read over, D—

* One Hundred and Fifty-second Article of War.

pleaded "Not guilty." "I should advise you," said the president sternly to him, "to give this court as little trouble as possible, or it may be the worse for you;" upon which the poor trembling fellow—thinking, probably, to propitiate his judges—withdrawed his plea of "Not guilty," and pleaded "Guilty," although perfectly innocent of the crime he was charged with. What would have occurred, had he persisted in pleading "Not guilty," we cannot imagine, as he was sentenced to all the punishment it was possible for the court-martial to award—namely, "fifty lashes and six months' imprisonment with hard labour," every lash of which was inflicted; while the general, with strange irony, remitted half the imprisonment, in consideration of "the prisoner's previous very good character!" The first act of this drama ended in D——'s being tried, and convicted of a crime there was not the slightest evidence he had ever committed. The second act began in the Riding-school of the New Cavalry Barracks at Aldershot, when, having been tied up to the triangles, D—— was flogged, and it ended when he had finished his imprisonment. But years passed ere the curtain fell upon the third and concluding act. This happened in the regimental hospital, the dramatis personæ present being the doctor and a few other officials, with a dying patient for the chief actor. Poor wretch, he had been acting for years; but now, when upon the verge of eternity, he dropped the mask. He, the dying man, owned to having been the thief—the man who had stolen Cornet B——'s money, and for whose crime D—— had been flogged and imprisoned. So what could be done was done. D——'s court-martial was cancelled, thereby restoring him to the pay, service, and other benefits, which, through being tried innocently for disgraceful conduct, he had forfeited. It did him, therefore, some good; but we doubt if even the three halfpence daily more pension he was given on discharge, above what he was strictly entitled to, will ever rub out the remembrance of the fifty lashes, and of the imprisonment he was awarded so unjustly.

Here we have a private wrongfully punished for a crime never committed. Let us see how a thieving officer fared, against whom the evidence was conclusive. His crime was, "For shameful and scandalous conduct, in stealing a pocket-handkerchief, the property of another officer; and with also stealing a bottle of wine

from the mess-room, and at the same time allowing it to be charged to the account of a captain." The finding was a curious jumble of censure and extenuation, while the sentence was only "suspension from rank and pay for six months." More recently, an officer at Gibraltar, who had, for months, been robbing his comrades of watches, jewellery, &c., was at last caught. There was no doubt of his guilt, as the stolen articles were all found in his rooms; yet he was allowed to escape—an escape, if not planned, at least winked at by the authorities; for his name, although a criminal as well as a deserter, never appeared in the *Hue and Cry*.

At York, in 1862, Corporal E—— was sent out of barracks to get change of a sovereign, and, being unable to get change near, went down the town for it, met some friends, stopped absent, and spent the money. Strictly speaking, this was only a breach of trust; and, had the money been a private's, the corporal's promise to pay would have been sufficient to settle the matter. But it belonged to a superior, so Corporal E—— was tried, reduced, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. He would probably have been flogged as well, but new regulations, forced out of the authorities by the voice of public opinion, had rendered it illegal to flog a first-class man, as a non-commissioned officer must be. We might go on to tell how another non-commissioned officer was reduced, upon the evidence of the sergeant-major, for being drunk at guard-mounting, although a score of men testified to the prisoner's having been sober five minutes before, and five minutes after, guard parade. The president said, "The corporal is not tried for being drunk at five minutes before or five minutes past six o'clock, his crime is for being drunk at six o'clock precisely." Need we continue? We think not, for surely, if so many cases of injustice can happen in one corps—and all those not otherwise specified did occur in the one regiment—the number that have taken place in the army may be easily imagined!

The authorities have just issued a new pension-warrant, and published a paper setting forth "The Advantages of the Army." They have shown the bright side of the shield; let them act honestly, and show the dark side also; or else, by instituting immediate reforms in the military law, make it impossible in future for such gross acts of injustice as we have related to ever again happen in the British Army.

THE DRAINING OF THE ZUIDERZEE.

THE Zuiderzee is the youngest of our European waters; it is also the shallowest. Mynheer Van Dunck, whose praise is in the old song, and of whom it is recorded that

A Dutchman's draught should potent be,
And deep as the rolling Zuiderzee,

may not have been such a foe to Sir Wilfrid Lawson after all.

The Zuiderzee is in great part made up of sandbanks, covered with not more than three or four feet of water; the channels along which its exceedingly difficult navigation is conducted average from fifteen to twenty feet, and these of course will form ready-made canals into which the rainfall will flow, while the sandbanks will often answer for dykes, supporting roads and railways, especially the great sandbank which stretches unbroken from Kampen to Enkhuizen, and which, the surveyors say, will just form the necessary embankment to keep out the German Ocean.

So much for its shallowness.

In proof of its youth, you have only to turn to your ancient atlas, and there, instead of the huge estuary, you find a small lake, called Flevo, joined to the sea by a winding river. In those days the country was a vast forest, gradually turning into a peat-bog, as, owing to the cutting down of woods farther inland, the floods on the many mouths of the Rhine spread wider and wider. Then the Amstel and Yssel got more and more silted up, and their waters were thrown into Lake Flevo, where they became stagnant.

The Roman engineering made things worse; Drusus turned one stream of the Rhine into the Yssel, hoping this would scour the river and make a proper passage. But his works were interrupted; the blockade continued, still more water was thrown into Flevo, which was now in a normal state of overflow, and the tendency to become a peat-bog was increased. So things went on till the terrible storms of 1282, which so changed, not the Dutch coast only, but the English also. The German Ocean, driven in by a strong north wind, burst the downs or sand-hills that had long been a barrier against the outgoing, and a protection against the incoming waters, and the Zuiderzee took the shape that it has kept for nearly six hundred years.

Now, however, it is to be drained, the inner half of it, at least, as the Haarlem

Lake was, some quarter of a century ago, with the help of our own Sir John Rennie, and as the inlet of the Y has been within the last few years, Sir J. Hawkshaw being one of the engineers. This is the last project of the Dutch Waterstaat, a department answering to our "Woods and Forests," and highly necessary in a country one half of which is below the sea-level, protected only by the sand-hills aforesaid, helped out here and there by sea-banks faced with granite. Change is the law of nature along this Dutch coast. Dollart Lake was made by the sea bursting in in 1277; Biesbosch Lake by a similar inroad in 1421, during which they say one hundred thousand people were drowned; the old Rhine, silted up in 869, was not perfectly freed till the beginning of this century; the Maas has lately been giving trouble in the same way. The business of the Waterstaat is to make a continual stand against this change, to see that sluices, canals, dykes, and all the machinery for pumping the rainfall off the polders are in good order. If they can do a little draining in between, so much the better. The Haarlem Lake gave more than forty thousand acres of tolerably good land; the inner half of the Zuiderzee will give, say, five hundred thousand. Van Diggelen's idea, broached in 1849, was to drain the whole, making a vast dyke across the mouth. The present heads of the Waterstaat, Mynheers Beyerinck, Stieltjes, and others, are more modest; they will be content with half, and already money has been found by the Government, to pay for the thorough survey which has been made.

The plan is as follows: two ship-canals, from eighty to one hundred yards wide, with branches to every important place, are to run through and across the recovered land; and besides these there is a whole network of smaller canals, running Dutch-fashion along the top of dykes into which the drainage will be pumped. Then every polder (meadow below the sea-level) has its own set of ditches, so that a map of the proposed work looks like a spider-web with the meshes very close. The work that is to be done may be estimated from what was done in the Y, where one polder, of something more than two thousand acres, needed nearly two hundred and fifty thousand yards of ditches and twenty-six thousand yards of dykes, eight yards wide at top. There is quite two hundred and fifty times this amount of land to be drained at the Zuiderzee!

As for the grand sea-dyke, it will have to be at least as strong as any in the country. That by Westkappel, where the Walcheren downs suddenly sink, may serve as a sample. It needs to be strong, for in 1808 the sea burst through it, drowning a great many people. Now it has been rebuilt—a breakwater of solid stone a yard above high-water mark, capped with seven yards more of turfed clay. Its slope is one foot in fourteen, and it is fifteen yards wide at the top, carrying a railway as well as a highroad, while for further protection it is fronted by eleven rows of piles. The dyke of the Y, finished four years ago, is just as strong, though instead of one slope it has three; the lowest, up to low-water mark, of one foot in four or five; the next, between tides, of one in twenty; the highest, of one in three. The Zuiderzee dyke will have to be just as strong, carrying also a highroad and a railway. Fortunately there is, as we said, a sand-bank ready to serve as foundation, for to build a dyke on a peat bottom is risky work—almost as hard as that bit of railway across Chatmoss, which so sorely puzzled Stephenson; whereas experience has taught the Dutch that good firm sand is as sound a bottom as rock. Railway bridges have actually been built on sand on the Amsterdam line, without the use of piles.

When the grand dyke is built, the land that is cut off from the sea will be divided into patches, each surrounded with its causeway and canal, into which the water will be gradually pumped up. These canals will run into the ship-canals, and these last will discharge into big reservoirs which will be emptied every neap-tide. That is how the thing was managed at Haarlem and at the Y.

Then comes the making of bridges and sluices; and then, since the fall at the reservoirs is not enough to carry off all the water—since, moreover, in certain winds it may be impossible to open the sea-sluices—pumping-machinery has to be set up. The old windmills are getting superseded; either men are less patient, or the winds are less amenable to control than they were. Steam is very generally in use; and Mynheer Dirks, who superintended the drainage of the Y, has made a calculation that, assuming the mean depth to be four-and-a-half yards, it will take nine thousand four hundred horse-power, working for about two-and-a-half years, to drain the inner half of the Zuiderzee. Then come the dredges neces-

sary to clear away the mud before laying foundations; enormous dredges, working day and night, may be seen in a good many parts of Holland.

After this, the making of roads and railroads is comparatively easy work; where there is no bottom but peat, a platform of faggots, with sandbags laid upon it, is found to be sufficient to support a train.

The thing can be done. There is no doubt of that; it is only carrying out on a larger scale what has already succeeded at Haarlem and elsewhere. But will it pay? Haarlem Lake was a failure financially; the land sold for an average of less than twenty-five pounds an acre, though some of it brought as much as sixty-five pounds. To cover the bare expenses, allowing moderate interest on capital, the Zuiderzee average must not be less than thirty-two pounds—leaving out a tenth of the recovered surface for roadways and canals. Of course, to throw such a large quantity of land at once into the market will bring down the prices; but then it need not all be sold—it will not all be ready for sale—at once. Besides, the price of land in Holland has, we are told, more than doubled since the Haarlem work was brought to an end. The prices made the other day for the polders rescued from the Y averaged over seventy pounds. More than seventeen millions sterling, they say, will be needed—principal, interest, and all. Where is the money to come from? The Haarlem Lake was drained by Government. We English may, perhaps, say that is why it didn't pay. Anyhow, it took a very long time doing. The Y was drained by a company, the State advancing a quarter of the money free of interest, repaying itself as the land was sold, and, moreover, guaranteeing four per cent. on the whole concern. Whether the Dutch Government will or will not leave a whole province—for the ground recovered will be larger than a good many of the eleven United Provinces—is doubtful. It could afford to do the work better than any one else, for, besides the sale of the land, it would be sure to be paid in the long run by the land-tax, which averages about four shillings per acre. There would be other taxes into the bargain; in fact, it would be a peaceful annexation, by pump and pickaxe, instead of by needle-gun and Krupp's cannon, or by the delusive method of universal suffrage. It is a kind of annexation which we are enjoined, very early in the Bible, to set about; but as yet we

have thought a deal more about subduing one another than subduing the earth.

Success, then, to the Dutch in their work! They, at any rate, have done their full share in subduing the earth, or, rather, we may quote the old proverb, and say that "God made the world, but the Dutchmen made Holland." What they have done, too, contrasts admirably, in one respect, with the Suez Canal. M. de Lesseps deserves all praise; he had to make his canal, and he was obliged to get the work done as he could; but had the English newspapers, instead of talking folly about its impossibility, protested against its being done by forced labour, they would have been doing good work. The misery caused by the making of that canal is, perhaps, only equalled by that caused by the building of the Great Pyramids. Herodotus tells us that the old Egyptians never named Cheops and the other Pyramid builders without a curse; perhaps the poor wretched fellow of to-day is too far gone to curse audibly; but we may be sure that, if he says the less he feels the more. There is no fear of anything like this in draining the Zuiderzee. True, there is a great deal of poverty in Holland—more, perhaps, than exists in any of the better sort of countries, except our own. But to the Dutch poor this big draining work will be, not a curse, but a blessing. There will be no forced labour. The men will be paid for what they do, not with blows, after the Khedive's fashion, but in good, honest Dutch coin. That is a grand thing. There will be good work for many hundred men, lasting for from twelve to twenty years. Who says that Holland is not a good country to live in, where nature gives such a permanent godsend to the working man?

Some have fancied that drying up the inland sea will injure the commerce of the places on its banks. What commerce they have may be judged from the epithet "dead," applied to them by a recent traveller in those parts.* You can't sail about comfortably on the Zuiderzee, as the writer of *Mynheer Van Dunck* evidently thought you could. You would run hopelessly aground in five minutes. You must have a pilot. A pilot did I say? There is no one pilot probably in all Holland who could take you all over it. Every here and there you have to change pilots, each fresh

one, as he comes on board, showing his Government certificate authorising him to guide ships between certain limits. Even so it is dangerous enough; every here and there you see the hulks of stranded ships, like the carcases which travellers across the Desert tell of.

Altogether, the drying up of this shallow estuary will, in all probability, be a blessing to the cities on its banks. Instead of a very difficult treacherous waterway they will then have good ship-canal, and in Holland good ship-canal are very good indeed. The work will be every whit as useful to the traders as to the farmers. Nor is the interest in the work confined to Holland. Even if you do not like Dutch cheese (there is worse in the market) you may think yourself happy if, when you buy "real Ostend," you never get anything worse than Dutch butter. Butter in Holland is butter, not the nauseous compound which, in England, often goes by that name. And if you want a cow, do just go to the New Cattle Market, when a shipment of Dutch beasts has come in. You will never talk of Alderneys again. There are udders for you, inherited from a line of fore-mothers, who have been milked to the last drop by the deft fingers of thrifty Dutch girls. Such beauties, too, to look at; mostly black and white, or white and dark gray. They seem to keep the Cuypp-coloured brown and red cow at home; but these others are a change in this country, and a very pleasing one. If I wanted a cow, I would buy a Dutch one. Ergo, since the Zuiderzee will feed ever so many thousand head of cattle, and make ever so many million pounds of cheese and butter, I say—as a Dutch tract, published two years ago, said—"Make haste and begin!"

A CHARMING COTERIE.

FOR many years of my life I have spent eleven months of them in endeavouring to make, invest, collect, save, and generally scrape together, such sums of money as will enable me to meet jovial, but rather expensive, Father Christmas with a frank and open countenance, and something approaching to the semblance of a welcome. This having been my main object from all the firsts of January I have known, until all the twenty-fifths of December that I can remember, need I record it here that the few days left to me for undunned indulgence in the festive after-dinner nap—reckless extravagance

* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, Vol. 14, p. 533, "The Dead Cities of the Zuiderzee."

in the matter of attempting to enjoy myself in the noisy bosom of my family, and wild flings into the mad debaucheries of cakes and ale generally—find me in such a state of exhaustion, from my futile annual effort to make both ends meet, that I pass them as a rule in torpor?

Now torpor is a very good thing in its way—a useful invention when the enemy, in the shape of dull friends, disagreeable topics, family feuds, lowering bills, and other such unpleasant subjects are on the “tapis.” The time arrived when I came to regard it as an unwholesome, unwelcome accompanist to the rich, spirit-stirring song a real holiday ought to sing into my life. During all the days of my responsible being I have worked hard, earnestly, incessantly; hitherto my reward has been that I have been enabled to keep the wolf from the door—to keep the ravening creature from my own door, and from approaching the portals of those who were dearer to me than myself. But the time has passed for me to take active pleasure any longer in the passive, Quixotic enjoyment. I have a balance at my bankers, I tell myself with pride. The few weeks that intervene between my settlement of the bills that have harassed me all the year round, and my incurring fresh bills for the year to come, shall be spent in trying to realise some of the dreams of my youth. I will hie me from garish, gay, selfish, heartless London. (Though I say this I fail to recall any special instance of either heartlessness or selfishness on the parts of any of my London friends.) I will respond to the friendly zeal with which my friend Harwood has pursued me, with cordial invitations, “to go down to Charchester, and take them as I find them in his homely quarters.” I will, in short, take my hardly-earned winter holiday in a place that has been described to me as the real elysium on earth—an English sea-side town, brimming over with good society and good feeling.

“None of your petty jealousies, and ignoble squabbles, and vile scandals, down with us at Charchester, Jack!” Harwood had said to me, heartily, when inviting me down to his “little place,” with wild eagerness, in the summer. “You London people feed at each other’s tables, and go straight away and cut each other’s throats, and laugh at each other’s foibles. Now that’s not my idea of hospitality and social life. I say, sir, when a man eats another man’s salt,” and so on, and so on, ad libitum.

To the best of my ability I explained to my Arcadian friend that my memory might be bad, but that still I thought it would have served me had any such sanguinary proceeding, as that at which he had darkly hinted, taken place in our London coterie. But before I had concluded my appeal on behalf of something like a moderate belief in a decent feeling existing between us, Mrs. Harwood’s silver-bell-like voice struck in:

“It’s positively shocking, to me, Mr. Belsize, to see how satiated the young girls of your set are with everything. Miss Belfer was critical last night about the way the Colleen Bawn was put on the stage; she mentioned too that Delpport’s wife had run away from him, because he hit her on the head with a poker. She must be quite young still, but she mentioned these things with an air of confidence and authority that shocked me—positively shocked me.”

“Mary Belfer is as good and sweet a girl as ever breathed,” I replied; “but she has lived in a high-pressure atmosphere. Her father is editor of an important daily. She hears the play discussed before it is acted; she learns from a side-wind what is said of the star of the theatrical season at rehearsal. Delpport and his wife both visited in her set; how can she avoid knowing that they are unfortunately separated?”

“I call it a most demoralising atmosphere,” Mrs. Harwood replied, severely; “no wonder that you look weary and worn out after living in it so long. Come to Charchester, and I’ll introduce you to a dozen girls quite as pretty and clever as Mary Belfer—girls who don’t mangle celebrated actors’ reputations, or give you the latest news from the Divorce Court.”

“Yes, yes; come to us, Jack,” Harwood struck in, heartily; “and we’ll show you what country life is in a charming coterie.”

Now the time had come for me to avail myself of all this kindness; and I started with a head full of pleasant anticipations, and a heart brimming over with peace, good-will, and loving-kindness towards all my fellow-creatures. Mary Belfer had bidden me God-speed on my journey in the heartiest way possible. Nevertheless I felt that it would have been more gratifying had she shown more modified satisfaction at my departure.

“Good-bye, Jack,” she said, as we parted on the staircase, at one of Lady

Litter's 'At homes.' "I'm glad you're going away for a change—you need it terribly; and that lovely air is sure to do you good. Where are you going?"

"You remarked that the 'lovely air' would be sure to do me good, and now you ask me where I'm going," I replied, with bitter sarcasm filling my heart and failing to express itself in words. I have always been rather fond of Mary, and I felt rather hurt on this occasion to perceive how utterly the prospect of my prolonged absence from town failed to move her.

"I take it for granted that you wouldn't go away from London just now, when everything is in full swing, unless you were going to a place where the air was lovely," she rejoined, promptly. "But don't cavil at what I say; you won't hear my words of wisdom much longer. Tell me—where are you going, and what are you going to do? Marry?"

"Certainly not," I said, in dignified tones. "I'm going down merely on an informal visit to some very old friends at Charchester."

"Charchester!" she interrupted, with a laugh. "Well, I hope you'll like it; wouldn't I like to go there for a few weeks! Oh Jack! I wish I could go down with you. What a bore it is that I am not a boy for this occasion only; if I were we'd run down together, and give Charchester something to gossip about."

"My dear girl," I interposed, in my most superior tone, "Charchester is not at all a place after Mary Belfer's heart, or in which Mary Belfer could shine! I have friends who have been living there for years, and it was quite amusing to me to see the impatience with which they hied them back to its purer air, after a month's experience of the way we live now in London."

"It's always delightful to see the patriotic spirit displaying itself unnecessarily as well as necessarily, in small as well as in big things," Mary replied, with a laugh. "Well, we shall hear of you, I presume, while you're blowing the shepherd's reed, and leading a quiet flock to feed, and all that sort of thing; good-bye!" And Mary glided on down the staircase in the wake of her chaperon, giving me one kind glance as she went, the memory of which I took down with me to Charchester.

My train was late; I learnt afterwards that the trains were always late in arriving at Charchester. The country is so lovely for the last fifty miles before you reach it, that the kind-hearted engine-drivers eat

lotus, and give the passengers plenty of time to enjoy the scenery. However, Harwood was at the station to meet me in a well-turned-out mail Phaeton, in which he was driving a couple of handsome, well-matched horses.

"I flatter myself that not many things pass me on the road round about here," he remarked to me as we dashed away from the station, and took the road that led right through the bright, gay-looking town towards his house, which was embowered in a wooded dell between two cliffs on the coast.

"You pride yourself on your cattle, I see," I remarked, not knowing what else to say. The subject of another man's stable was not an absorbingly interesting one to me. My chief acquaintance with that noble animal, the horse, has been formed from my daily observation of those that are drawing me, when I am perched on the knife-board of an omnibus.

"Rather," he answered dryly, in the disgusted tones of one who has trotted out his hobby and failed to win admiration of its paces. "When you've seen Maggie's mare, and the pony she drives in her little dog-cart, and my hunters, you'll acknowledge that I have some reason to 'take pride in my cattle.'"

Mrs. Harwood was as beaming, bright, and charming a hostess as the heart of the most exacting guest could desire. The dinner was excellent; the house, grounds, and all the appointments were in beautiful order and admirable taste. "Here is peace!" I said enthusiastically to myself, as I smoked my last cigar out of my bedroom window that night. "I see the life of luxurious retirement they lead is exactly the one to restore the tone to my faded system; I shall have nothing to disturb me—

"No doubtful balance of rights and wrongs;
No weary lawyers with endless tongues;
But low of cattle, and song of birds,
And health, and quiet, and loving words."

I rose up in the morning, feeling rejuvenated by the prospect. It would be such effortless enjoyment. There was the lawn, with its groups of drooping trees shading comfortable seats; there was the billiard-room, with its low divan running all round the room; there were the horses, waiting my orders, in the stable; and there was the prettiest little yacht ever built, dancing at anchor in the bay, ready to take me a cruise, at any moment I liked, round a splendid bit of coast. I

counted up my privileges, and resolved to enjoy them.

"Let us take a turn down to the club," Harwood said to me after breakfast, just as I had settled myself in a shady nook on the lawn, with three newspapers and half-a-dozen dogs.

"The club! You don't mean to say you go to one here? You might as well be in London," I urged discontentedly.

"The fact is, Jack, I must go down; there's a row on about the last regatta, and several of the members are trying to make it too hot for me; besides, I want to show you the town, and some of our 'rosebud garden of girls.' Come along!"

I went along, feeling that I might almost as well have been making my way to the Garrick. However, it was easier to obey than to revolt. Accordingly, Jack and I strolled down to the club, where several of the members looked blankly black at him; and he kindly enlightened me as to the antecedents of a few more.

"Look at that fellow over there, with the boots and gaiters," he muttered; "looks like a middle-class Norfolk farmer, doesn't he? Calls himself 'Duc de Lasmès,' forsooth, and has cooked up a pedigree and put it in Debrett! My good fellow, that isle of the free, Jersey, could tell you some tales about him."

"Don't care to hear them," I said, languidly.

"Well, well, I acknowledge he's not a savoury subject. I can only say I scratch my horse as soon as I hear he has anything to do with a race. He's shady all round; has a wife somewhere whom he never produces—fancy a duchess kept dark!"

"Let us go and look at the 'rosebud garden of girls,'" I suggested, by way of turning the conversation, and accordingly we sallied out, and began pacing up and down the one long promenade, where, as Harwood assured me, we were sure to meet all that was worth meeting.

Charchester supplied a splendid show of pretty women and fair young girls that day, and I must credit them with this—namely, that almost without exception they dressed well! There was no slovenliness, no sea-side, slouchy untidiness about them, to nullify the effect of faces and figures that were, in the majority of cases, I was bound to confess, charming!

"Who are those three well-set-up-girls?" I asked, indicating a trio in navy-blue serge, embroidered in black.

"They're known familiarly as the 'Give-us-a-trial' girls. Their father has patented

a sewing-machine, made a fortune by it, and has built a huge place, with stabling for twenty horses—a cross between a Chinese pagoda and an Elizabethan mansion—out on the Markham-road. My wife could tell you two or three stories about them; they don't stick at trifles while they're trying to settle themselves."

We had turned by this time, and met them again, and now they were accompanied by a handsome young fellow with a weak chin, and an overpowering air of insufferable conceit about him.

"Ugh! Look there?" Harwood exclaimed, contemptuously; "they've got young Roper in tow. The fool has just come into his property, which he is spending in the most approved forms of low vice; but any one of those girls would marry him if he held his finger up."

"Who's that?" I asked, eagerly, as a graceful woman, with the face of a Murillo's Madonna, passed us, leading a handsome little boy by the hand, and followed by a huge St. Bernard dog.

"That's Mrs. Chester—the prettiest woman, and the most fascinating too, by Jove! in Charchester. It's a case of 'Cry havoc! and let loose the dogs of war,' whenever her name is mentioned. Don't say to Maggie that we've seen her. Here's Kate Rawdon at last; I've been waiting to introduce you to her."

Kate Rawdon was amenable to his advances, and permitted the introduction; and as soon as we had resumed our promenade by her side, Harwood left me with her, and went off to join Mrs. Chester.

"Are you a stranger here?" the young lady began, patronisingly. She was a fine blonde, with hair that glittered, and teeth and eyes that flashed. I admitted that I was a stranger, and she resumed:

"Ah, then! till you get into the swim you won't care for us much; not but what Mrs. Harwood can post you up in all the gossip as well as anyone I know—some people would tell you, better, 'because she originates it;' but I won't say so. If you want to see a sweet picture painted of your hostess, go to Mrs. Chester——"

"The lady Harwood is talking to now?"

"Yes, certainly; why shouldn't he talk to her? Oh! his wife and Mrs. Chester love each other dearly—it's a great joke."

"What a lovely little boy!" I said.

"Yes, and she's devoted to him—on the promenade; she knows that people must look at her, when she has that dog with her. She gives charming parties. I hope

we shall meet there. Good-bye; I must go and join a friend."

She hastened off in the direction of a laughing, brilliant group of girls, and, seeing me alone, Harwood rejoined me.

"How do you like Miss Rawdon?"

"Not a bit."

"Not like the 'bonnie Kate'?" he asked, in surprise. "Don't tell my wife—she swears by Kate Rawdon. There goes Roper up to the Royal for another peg! The way that fellow drinks is awful; if he had any brains they must soon soften. We'll go back to Maggie and luncheon."

We went back to Maggie and luncheon, and found the former in her habit, ready for her afternoon ride.

"The way some girls behave is really disgusting," she began at once; "the Crofton girls have been here all the morning, boring me terribly. They'd evidently heard that we had an unmarried man staying with us; they're awfully forward."

"They are very nice girls—no nonsense about them," Harwood put in, deprecatingly. "I've asked them to go out with us to-morrow for a sail."

"Then you'll go without me," his wife replied, testily.

"No, no, you'll go too, and ask your friend Kate Rawdon," he said good-temperedly.

"I shall do nothing of the kind; I'm beginning to think Kate Rawdon a double-faced little thing. The Croftons tell me that Kate and Mrs. Chester have struck up an alliance."

"Don't you like Mrs. Chester?" I asked innocently.

"Like Mrs. Chester! No; I confess to the weakness of having a preference for respectable women who live with their husbands."

"She can't well live with him on board the Arrogant, off the West Coast of Africa," Harwood says calmly; "you know she intends rejoining him directly he comes home."

"I know nothing of the sort; I know that I consider her a disgrace to Charterhouse society, and I shall withdraw my name from the subscription balls if she goes to them. Look at her friends? Louisa Dale is her chosen associate. Louisa Dale! It is really disgraceful!"

"I wonder what they think of you, old lady, when my back is turned?" her husband laughed. And she replied:

"The 'Give-me-a-trial' girls and Louisa Dale are capable of saying anything—I know that very well; but they're preferable to Miss Donne. She is the most audacious creature I ever met with in my life. Poor Captain Vaux, I pity him."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because she has got him to promise to marry her," Mrs. Harwood said, angrily; "and I'll tell you how they say she did it. There had been a great picnic out at the Worthleigh-woods, and Captain Vaux had taken a number of them—a clique they call the 'Irish Brigade'—out in his drag. When they were coming home, Miss Donne stepped up and took the box-seat beside the driver; and when someone else who wanted it remonstrated with her, she answered, 'I mean to keep my place. He's warranted to "strike only on the box;" and I mean to have an offer from him going home.' If he were my brother I know what I should do; as it is——"

"You have to grin and bear it, for fear they should say in scandalous circles that you have a tendresse for him yourself," her husband laughed.

"Not one woman pronounced to be pure; not one girl suffered to go scatheless!" I said to myself as I went to bed that night. "I am tired of this Arcadia; its charming coterie is more alarming than a band of wild barbarians would be; the 'Village' and Mary Belfer are good enough for me. I'll go back to them to-morrow."

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